

**SARHAD UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,
PESHAWAR**

POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



SARHAD UNIVERSITY, PESHAWAR

2022

SUIT's POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES-2022

Introduction:

This Policy aims to provide enabling environment in Sarhad University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar which not only motivates students with disabilities to undertake higher education, but also facilitates their participation in all academic and extra-curricular aspects of University Education.

The Policy recognizes that disability covers a wide range of impairments and different disabilities can have varying impacts on study, work and other aspects of life, warranting special considerations in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for persons with disabilities to successfully acquire higher education.

Definition of Persons with Disabilities:

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Declaration of Persons with Disabilities:

A person certified as a disabled person from the National/Provincial Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons or carrying a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) with the disability logo.

Scope of the Policy:

This policy is applicable to all students (at Main/sub-campus or registered in distance education mode) with disabilities at Sarhad University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar including enrolled students, prospective students and students that acquire disabilities during their studies.

For the purposes of this policy, the term “disability” shall mean any long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which may hinder a student’s ability to effectively participate in normal day-to-day activities on an equal basis with others; provided, that the definition will also include any additional conditions covered under the applicable disability-focused laws of the jurisdiction in which the SUIT is located.

The term “Disability Certificate” as used in this policy shall mean the disability certificate issued for persons with disabilities from the National/Provincial Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons or a CNIC with a disability logo or proof of registration in

NADRA's database as a 'special person'.

Accessibility Committee:

SUIT will establish a Standing Accessibility Committee comprising of at-least 06 members which included the following:

- Director Student Affairs or Senior University Officer.
- Two Members from the faculty (One Male and One Female).
- At least one Member from the student body.
- One representative of Psychological Wellbeing Committee / University's Medical Center / Planning & Development Department.
- One Staff Member deputed as Secretary to the Accessibility Committee

This Committee will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated to students, faculty and staff effectively and is being implemented at the University in its entirety.

(Annex-I).

General Provisions for Work of the Accessibility Committee:

1. In absence of the Chair, the senior most member shall act as Chair of the meeting.
2. The Chair and the members shall hold office for the period of three years and shall in no case be eligible for re-appointment for more than one similar term.
3. The Vice- Chancellor shall appoint all members of the Accessibility Committee except the ex-officio members and the representative of the student body.
4. The disabled students shall nominate their representative on the Accessibility Committee.

The responsibilities of the Accessibility Committee are detailed below:

- a. To determine what accommodations are needed for students with disabilities at the HEI including, where necessary, arranging for disability assessment by a professional;
- b. To arrange and oversee the provision of reasonable accommodations in accordance with this policy;
- c. To arrange for counseling by a psychiatrist for students with disabilities if a student requests or whenever substantial need is established;
- d. To provide information and advice to students and parents on the facilities and support available at the SUIT for persons with disabilities;
- e. To advise the faculty on the policies and procedures relevant to students with

disabilities and how best to include and accommodate these students;

- f. To improve access for students with disabilities vis-à-vis admissions, examinations, dissertations and other affairs of the institution and on the implementation of all relevant disability-related legislation;
- g. To raise funds for the provision or development of facilities for students with disabilities at the SUIT whenever needed;
- h. To promote awareness on different disabilities and disability related issues and the need to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities at the SUIT through dedicated seminars, fundraising events, discussions, workshops and community engagement activities and communicating the role of the Disability Coordinators to students, staff and faculty; and
- i. To liaise with philanthropic organizations working for persons with disabilities to enhance the capacities of their institutions to engage with persons with disabilities and to improve the facilities available for them at the SUIT.

Decisions of the Accessibility Committee:

The quorum requirement for meetings of the Accessibility Committee shall be 50% of the committee strength (with a fraction rounded upwards). Decisions shall be made by a majority of the members present.

The Disability Coordinators:

The Vice Chancellor shall designate two (02) non-student members (one male and one female) of the Accessibility Committee to be the Disability Coordinators for students with disabilities at the SUIT. In addition, each sub-campus, Affiliated Institution and each Distance Education Centre (DEC) is to nominate two faculty members (one male, one female). The names and contact details of the Disability Coordinators of the University and of sub-campus is to be displayed on the website, prospectus, brochures, and student handbooks of the SUIT and outside the Offices of Vice Chancellor/ Registrar. The names and contact details of the Disability Coordinators of the DECs are to be included in the DE prospectus, brochures and displayed outside the office of the DEC manager/ academic coordinators.

The responsibilities of the Disability Coordinators are detailed below:

- a. To be a point of liaison between the University Accessibility Committee and students with disabilities including connecting students with disabilities to the Accessibility Committee for determination of their accommodation requirements;

- b. To guide and advise students with disabilities interested in seeking admission and enrollment at the Main Campus, Sub-Campus, Affiliated Institution or DEC (as the case may be) on the facilities and accommodations available and arrangeable at the University/Sub-Campus/DEC/Affiliated Institution for persons with disabilities;
- c. To have regular, periodic meetings with enrolled students with disabilities and maintain records of these interactions. This practice should be used to assess any emerging needs the students may have and to decide the appropriate course of action to facilitate the student;
- d. To advise and facilitate enrolled students with disabilities during their studies on how to fulfill the administrative requirements of the institution and benefit from other services provided at the University/Sub-Campus/DEC/Affiliated Institution such as accommodations, library, career counseling, extra-curricular opportunities etc;
- e. To refer students with disabilities to the Accessibility Committee for arrangement of psychiatric counseling if a student requests or academic coaching whenever needed;
- f. To ensure that the students' access requirements are identified and made known to relevant faculty well ahead of commencement of classes;
- g. To advise students with disabilities before the commencement of each semester or academic year on their course selection and learning activities entailed; and
- h. To seek and record information on access requirements of individual student with disability enrolled at the SUIT/respective institution.

ADMISSIONS RELATED MATTERS

Application Process:

Before applying for admission, students with disabilities should be encouraged to visit the University, Sub-Campus, Affiliated Institution or the DEC (as the case may be) and the University website to assess the suitability of the premises and its surroundings. The University shall ensure that applicants have full information about the support available and can request additional accommodations as needed. The following are the details of the process that must be followed with respect to SUIT admissions.

- a. Admission application forms are to include a section where students can convey information on their disability. In certain circumstances, such as to avail the accommodations under this policy, applicants shall be required to provide attested copies of their Disability Certificates (as defined in this policy). The admission application form shall also include a questionnaire for students with

disabilities to explain their need for accommodations related to any entrance exams. Moreover, the University/Sub-Campus/Affiliated Institution/DEC shall take steps to improve accessibility of the admission forms / prospectus and all other additional details that might be required or useful for students with disabilities in the manner that accommodate the needs of the different disabilities.

- b. There shall not be any adverse impact on the application of a prospective student based on his or her disclosure of a disability. The application will be processed in the same manner as other applications, without any discrimination on the basis of the disclosed disability.
- c. Applicants are to be made aware that if they disclose their disability, the information provided on their application form will, subject to applicable legislation, be retained on the Institution's confidential records and made available to only relevant individuals involved in the admissions process and the members of the Accessibility Committee, which will provide necessary support during the application, interview, and entrance test process for students with disabilities.
- d. Applicants who have declared disability on their application form will be consulted about their needs and given advice on how the University/Institution will accommodate their needs.
- e. The University/ sub-Campus/ Affiliated Institutions/ DEC shall provide contact details for the Disability Coordinators and information on facilities available for students with disabilities through prospectus, website, brochures etc and advertisement for admission.
- f. In case, the University/ Institute does not have appropriate facilities to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to study at their premises on legitimate grounds, and the student has otherwise been deemed eligible to be admitted to the university in terms of the admission criteria, the Accessibility Coordinators shall report the matter to the Vice Chancellor/Registrar through the Accessibility Committee and the University shall make (if possible) necessary arrangements to provide the opportunity for the student to undertake the program of study at the SUIT.
- g. Upon admission, students with disabilities will be offered an opportunity to provide additional information and documentation about their accessibility needs.

Entrance Exam:

In case the admission process involves taking an Entrance Examination, any such examination must conform to the following requirements:

- a. Students with disabilities must be able to request special arrangements for entrance tests or interviews as per their needs;
- b. University/ Institution will ensure the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities depending on the type of their disability and need during their entrance exam. For example, students with visual impairment may be provided modified exam materials such as Braille papers (Grade 1/un-contracted or Grade 2/contracted), large print exams: either A4 size (18pt bold font) or A3 size (15.5pt font). Students with hearing impairments may be provided special materials or lip-reading test. Depending on the type of disability, including learning disabilities, arrangements such as the following may be made:
 - (i) extra time (25-100 per cent extra time depending on the student's need),
 - (ii) supervised breaks during the examination,
 - (iii) use of a computer,
 - (iv) use of an amanuensis,
 - (v) use of a reader or a scribe,
 - (vi) option for an oral exam,
 - (vii) separate invigilation, or
 - (viii) a private area to take tests.

For physical disabilities, appropriate accommodations shall be provided depending on the individual case, including providing wheelchair access etc. However, the Accessibility Committee/Disability Coordinators shall ensure that the accommodation provided is reasonably related to the type of disability, so that while providing the accommodation, no one is given an unfair advantage.

- c. In some cases, students with disabilities may be exempted from a part of an Examination because of a disability. SUIT may decide to use an alternative assessment tool to ascertain suitability of the student for the degree program. This will be decided by the Academic Council of the SUIT.
- d. Students with disabilities must be informed well in advance about the arrangements being provided for them to undertake the entrance exam.
- e. In case the entrance exam is administered by a third party, if the designated test administrator does not provide appropriate facilities for students with disabilities to suitably take the test, the University/ Institution will arrange for an alternative entrance exam for students with disabilities.

Financial Aid, Quotas, and Age Relaxation Requirements:

People with disabilities may qualify for several benefits including those presented below:

- a. Students with disabilities may qualify for certain benefits under the provisions of the applicable disability laws of the jurisdiction in which they are located. The SUIT shall ensure the provision of such benefits in accordance with relevant legislation. In the absence of, or in addition to, any such benefits, the SUIT shall adopt a **needs-based** system to facilitate students with disabilities whose financial situation may not otherwise permit them to afford their educational and any additional expenses related to their needs. The need basis of students with disabilities shall be determined in accordance with the criteria applicable in any government program like Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Program. For the needy disabled students, all institutional charges including tuition fee, hostel fee and utility charges shall be waived, to the extent not covered from any other scholarship / support program **on case to case basis**.
- b. Students with disabilities may qualify for age relaxation in admission requirements and disability quotas under applicable legislation, and the SUIT shall ensure compliance in accordance with relevant legislation. The SUIT's website and prospectus will clearly mention any designated quota for persons with disabilities and any age relaxation options.
- c. Any seat reservation/quota for the disabled in any program/discipline will be subject to approval of the Academic Council of the University.
- d. Age relaxation up to ten years for admission to all educational programs.

Process for Requesting Reasonable Accommodations

- a. The University, Sub-Campus, or Affiliated Institutions shall provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities whenever necessary to encourage their participation in higher education including in classrooms, libraries, laboratories, cafeterias and sports centers. The website of the SUIT and other web based services such as student portals, LMS etc. shall accordingly conform to level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- b. The obligation for Main/ Sub-Campuses to provide support and necessary accommodations to students with disabilities is an anticipatory duty. In other words, the Main/ Sub-Campuses shall have preparedness to offer reasonable accommodations to students and should not wait to initiate action until requested.
- c. All students are to be informed about options to request reasonable accommodations commensurate with their need during the orientation session.

Students with disabilities will be offered an assessment of their study and support needs at the earliest opportunity, preferably before they enroll, or shortly after the commencement of their program. As evidence of their disability for the purposes of this assessment, the Accessibility Committee may rely on a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner, documenting the disability and the need for any accommodations.

- d. At the commencement of each course, staff and faculty shall also clearly inform the students that any student who, because of a disability, may require special accommodations in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor or the Disability Coordinators as soon as possible so that requisite arrangements can be made. Faculties are encouraged to use textbooks that are available in alternative format. It may not be necessary to rewrite a course to accommodate students with disabilities; simply modifying the presentation of materials may make it fully accessible.
- e. It is important to note that in making its assessment, the Accessibility Committee is to strive to understand and recommend reasonable accommodations specifically focusing on the needs of the individual student rather than recommending generic accommodations that may apply to a certain category a disability. Once an assessment has been conducted, the Accessibility Committee shall forward its directions to the relevant implementing authority, provided that in case of any accommodations that are directly related to examinations and assessments, approval of the competent authority designated by the SUIT shall be required before implementation.
- f. The views of the students with disabilities will be taken into consideration at all times during the assessment of their needs. The assessment report, containing detailed recommendations, will be shared with the student prior to its implementation.
- g. Alternatively, the class teacher, the Disability Coordinators and the student may mutually discuss and decide on any special requirements needed (including those needed for midterm or final examinations) and accommodations at the start of the course and share them with the Accessibility Committee if its support is needed.
- h. In case, the arrangements like accommodations may take considerable time, the disabled students should be informed of their course requirements, course components and reading materials well before the commencement of a course and on their accessibility requirements at the start of the course.
- i. The Accessibility Committee is to monitor the implementation of any accommodations deemed necessary and reasonable.
- j. The University will ensure the provision of the same level of services and support to students who acquire any disability (or become aware of their disability)

during the course of their study. Every reasonable opportunity will be provided to them to complete their studies successfully.

- k. A student with a temporary disability may receive accommodations as needed on a case to case basis upon submission of a medical certificate by a registered medical practitioner and upon recommendation by the Accessibility Committee for reasons to be recorded in writing.
- l. Faculty and staff should be made aware of the use of accommodations and learning aides for students with disabilities.
- m. The University/ Institution shall have training programs to train faculty, staff, and members of the accessibility committee/ coordinators on best practices for accommodating students with disabilities and especially encourage its staff, faculty, and students to participate in development opportunities related to the provision of education to persons with disabilities;
- n. Students with disabilities shall be encouraged to suggest improvements in accessibility and accommodation services available at the SUIT. If one student with a particular type of disability had difficulty with a specific task, the faculty, the Accessibility Committee, and the Disability Coordinators may not assume that the next student with the same type of disability will experience similar problems. Students with disabilities are frequently sensitive about their disabilities, so faculty, the Disability Coordinators and staff should make every effort to treat these issues sensitively and confidentially.

Examinations and Assessments:

At the commencement of each course appropriate arrangements for examination and assessment will be determined through mutual consultation between the faculty, the Disability Coordinators and the student. To qualify for an accommodation, the student must provide a Disability Certificate. Alternative arrangements can be made with the view that students are able to demonstrate their learning appropriately and suitably meet the criteria for progression or the conferment of an award. In general, standards for academic credit should not be modified. They may need accommodations in testing, but the content should not be changed unless necessary. Alternative arrangements for examination (for example, extra time, reduced distractions, use of assistive technology such as laptops, scribes etc.) must be approved in accordance with the above stated provisions. Where needed, students with disabilities can choose whether or not to have their disability declared on their exam booklet so an external examiner is alerted to their disability.

Grievances

Any grievances pertaining to disability services available at the SUIT or any complaint by a student with disability concerning discrimination, abuse or mistreatment by another student, staff or faculty is to be submitted to the Disability Coordinators. SUIT will ensure that students are aware of the process for filing a grievance. If they are unable to resolve the concern, the Accessibility Committee may be approached. The matter may be referred to the Vice Chancellor if the issue is not appropriately resolved by the Accessibility Committee.

If the grievance concerns a Disability Coordinator or a member of the Accessibility Committee, the complaint shall be received directly by the office of the Vice Chancellor/Registrar, who shall replace the person against whom the complaint has been made if substantial grounds (such as harassment, discrimination, indolence, etc) for removal are established.

Participation in Sports, Cultural and Recreational Facilities:

Students shall be able to participate equally in all aspects of student life. SUIT shall provide reasonable accommodations to allow students with disabilities to take part in student activities and athletics if they wish to.

Continuing Education, Vocational Training, Online Education, Skill Development, Distance Learning, Adult Education, and Training:

Students with disabilities shall have access to all necessary accommodations that would allow them to pursue all educational and skill related activities offered to their peers.

Accommodations during Convocation:

SUIT shall make every effort to ensure that students with disabilities are able to participate fully in their convocations and enjoy this day along with all their fellow graduates.

Funds to Support Reasonable Accommodations:

SUIT shall establish a special fund to support students with disabilities and annually contribute sufficient funds therein through exclusive budgetary provision. Additionally, all funds and contributions raised through philanthropy shall accrue in this fund. Whenever the University's/ Institution's or a student with disabilities' own

financial resources are deficient in meeting an accessibility requirement pertaining to his or her studies, SUIT will use this fund to provide the necessary accommodations after a thorough evaluation of each case.
